



Working with Congress and core industry agencies to gain support for member telecom needs and to resolve conflicts among energy, water and telecom mandates

Utilities and other critical infrastructure (CI) entities will be increasingly dependent on information and communications technologies (ICT) as we move through the 21st century, especially with the migration to next-generation utilities and “smarter” electric, gas and water systems. For the first time, UTC is seeing widespread awareness of the importance of ICT to CI industries among the Federal and State agencies that regulate our members’ core functions, such as the Department of Energy, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and State utility regulatory commissions. UTC has been working with several Congressional committees, which have an understanding of our issues; and the Department of Homeland Security has long been aware of the ICT connection due to its CI protection and cyber security mandates. This increased awareness creates new opportunities for UTC to work for public policy goals with the agencies that understand our members’ industries best.

We already are seeing ICT-related mandates from new sources, such as the CIP 002-009 standards for cyber security from the North American Electric Reliability Council and calls for improved communications at nuclear generating plants from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Energy legislation likely will include incentives for greater efficiency and conservation that will be met through upgraded or new ICT networks. One of UTC’s roles is to help to educate all relevant agencies to understand 1) how CI entities communications systems function; 2) how new mandates necessitate new capabilities that must be both funded and supported technically and are likely to be implemented internally; and 3) that these agencies must help their industries’ cause with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which currently sees its role purely as an enabler of commercial, subscriber-based communications services and has not recognized the importance of its CI constituents or their communications needs.

UTC also sees its role as a facilitator among groups when conflicts emerge between energy and water and ICT regulations, such as between new, FERC-adopted standards and FCC rules. Such conflicts are inevitable as core agencies mandate in new ways that must be met through improved ICT networks. Working to resolve conflicts will help to develop the necessary ties among agencies so that industry needs may be met.

UTC is prepared to continue its leadership role now that core industry agencies are recognizing the importance of ICT to their primary constituents. We are broadening our aggressive representation of our members to these agencies as part of our work to ensure favorable regulatory and legislative policy so that our members can continue, and improve, their service to the public.